ODE
TO
CRITICISM.

By a GENTLEMAN of *Oxford.*

Mutemus Clypeos, DANAUMQUE Insignia NOBIS
Aptemus. Dolus, an Virtus quis in Hoste requirit?

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I.

HAIL, mighty Goddeſs, whom of yore,
Where fam'd Cimmeria boaſts her tenfold Gloom,
In thoſe deep Caverns, from her lab'ring Womb
Imperial Dulneſs bore.
At the Signal of thy Birth,
O'er the Rue-beſprinkled Earth,
Slowly ſullen Spleen advances,
Sneering Laughter joins the Dances,
Swift from her Den exulting Envy ſprings,
New trims her faded Torch, and ſharpens all her Stings.

II.

Farewel, ye Viſions light and vain,
The Delian Grove, with its enchanted Rill,
The cloven Summits of Parnaſſus' Hill,
Chimeras of the Brain.
No more ſuch Follies I purſue——
Thee, ſober-veſted Queen, I woo;
Thy propitious Help imploring,
As by Midnight Taper poring,
With ſtudious Care I mark ſome faulty Line,
Then curſe the Theban Harp, or HOMER's Work divine.

III.

Here in my hateful, loneſome Cell,
While Darkneſs ſpreads her murky Veil around,
When Pains corrode, and ſtormy Paſſions wound,
With thee I wiſh to dwell.
Tho' APOLLO bids deſpair,
Nor a Muſe regards my Pray'r;
Still with ever conſtant Kindneſs,
Thou wilt ſooth my votive Blindneſs;
I feel, I feel the maddening Influence reigns,
The black Bile ruſhes on, and revels in my Veins.

IV.

Borne on the rapid Wings of Thought,
E'en now I ſeem, in thy extenſive Shade,
Where baleful Yews o'ercome the ſickening Glade,
To quaff the plenteous Draught,
And behold thy Realms compriſe

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Learned,

Learned, Ignorant, and Wiſe,
All alike with hot Devotion,
Swallowing thy embitter'd Potion.
Fearleſs I take my ſelf-commiſſion'd Stand,
To wield thy ruthleſs Sword with unrelenting Hand.

V.

Hear then, O hear my fond Requeſt,
Whether, in poor Verona's hapleſs State,
Thou mourn'ſt thy SCALIGER's neglected Fate,
With Anguiſh-laden Breaſt.
Or with Rapture lov'ſt to view
Sourly ſmiling each REVIEW;
Quickly haſte to my Embraces,
Come, O come, in all thy Graces,
Where tuneful OXFORD *hails* thy *juſt* Domain,
Where at thy Shrine attend her delegated Train.

VI.

How ſhall I paint thy heavenly Charms!
In what high Praiſe my ardent Suit addreſs!
Or how the glowing Flame ſhall I expreſs
Which now my Boſom warms;
How deſcribe the mazy Road,
Leading to thy bleſt Abode!
Where thou ſit'ſt in State preſiding,
Us ignoble Rhimers guiding
To where the Banks of LETHE's ſilent Wave,
Before our paſſive Steps diſcloſe an early Grave.

VII.

Yet ſhall my feeble Lays preſume,
Wrapt in ideal Exſtacies, to trace
The winning Features of thy lovely Face,
And its primeval Bloom.

Thou, a *Silver-Slipper'd* Nymph,
Lightly tread'ſt the *dimply* Lymph,
With dank Sedge thy Treſſes wreathing,
*M*odulated *M*eaſures breathing;
A *Coral Crown* thy *Bright Brow Binds*, I ween,
And *down devolves* thy *Sweeping Stole of Gloſſy Green.*

VIII.

Oft, in nocturnal Serenade,
Anxious I wake my Lyre's diſcordant Strings,
Till the reſponſive Echo loudly rings
With thee, immortal Maid!
Ah! perchance my Hopes are vain——
Can'ſt thou then, with harſh Diſdain,
Spurn my too officious Duty,
Self-enamour'd of thy Beauty;
And cloſe thy ſtern, inexorable Heart,
Slighting the Vow ſincere, which wants the Gloſs of Art?

IX.

Hence, idle Fears——thou ſtill art kind:
Low at thy Footſtool bends my trembling Knee;
I ſue, O Goddeſs, and I ſue to thee,
To thy Behеſts reſign'd.
No rejected Votary's Moans
Taint the Air with feveriſh Groans.
Where we reſt, thy Charms enjoying,
Ever taſted, never cloying,
Widely thou pour'ſt thy all-diffuſive Rays,
Inſtant our kindling Souls with Fire congenial blaze.

X.

In RHEDYCINA's favour'd Seat,
Where richeſt Verſe thy ſmould'ring Altar feeds,
With him ſome choſen Sage obedient leads,
To give Thee Homage meet,

Falſe Surmiſes, hidden Flaws,
Old Grammarians crabbed Laws;
At thy Impulſe while elated,
By thy Pleaſures he unſated,
With his fell Pen from thy Tribunal bends,
As on the mangled Lines the frequent Blot deſcends.

XI.

When Autumn brought the lowering Year,
Fair Isis mingled with BRITANNIA's Woe;
Meanwhile thou taught'ſt her *Claſſic* Plaints to flow
O'er GEORGE's Grief-ſtain'd Bier.
How ſhe mourn'd the Monarch dead,
Father of his Country fled,
Ill befits my trite Narration——
I in leſs exalted Station,
Stupidly nod o'er Poeſy ſo fine,
Stretch'd on the lifeleſs Couch of Indolence ſupine.

XII.

That Part to Thee we conſecrate
Of the huge *Wreath* forſooth, *which all the Nine,*
With Skill united have conſpir'd to Twine.
A Fricaſſy of State!
'Twould make a Breakfaſt for a King;
Or ſhould he feaſt on no ſuch Thing
As See-ſaw Flattery, and his Spirit
Be coolly touch'd with ſo much Merit;
If he endure the Song with Look ſiniſter,
The Plan will ſuit at leaſt a Patriot-Miniſter.

XIII.

Full many a Youth, whoſe opening Shoot
Teem'd with poetic Foliage, o'er whoſe Head
Caſtalian Dews the gracious Muſe has ſhed,
And promis'd riper Fruit;

Such the firm Decrees of Fate,
Such the Shortneſs of his Date,
With the Troop of Phantoms nameleſs,
In that pious Volume fameleſs,
Where the triumphant Clouds of Smoke aſpire,
Sinks in Oblivion's Arms on the funereal Pyre.

XIV.

Far from the Terrors of thy Reign,
Curb'd by thy Frown, audacious Genius flies;
Or, if he impotently dares to riſe,
Is level'd to the Plain:
Nought avails his magic Art
To avert thy vengeful Dart;
And his inſolent empriſing;
Thou his vaunted Pow'r deſpiſing,
Eager his blaſted Glories to confound,
Strik'ſt him a breathleſs Corſe, unpitying, to the Ground.

XV.

When *Swinging Slow with Sweepy Sway*,
In one ſame conſtant Tenor run our Rhimes,
Like the ſweet Muſick of unvaried Chimes,
In diſtant due Delay;
Then our Vows thou deign'ſt to hear,
With a condeſcending Ear.
Aid, O Goddeſs, aid my Numbers,
Let me *Share* thy *Sweeteſt Slumbers*,
While from this Quill, as all along I doze,
In Apathy diſcreet the *Stumbling Stanza* flows.

FINIS.

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